DC

VERTIGO

NO. 57
FEB 94
$1.95 US
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SUGGESTED
FOR MATURE
READERS

NEIL GAIMAN
MARC HEMPEL

THE

SANDMAN

THE
KINDLY
ONES

DIRECT SALES
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IS IT READY YET? ARE YOU DONE?

NEARLY. *THERE* WE GO.

THERE WE ARE. ALL READY FOR YOU TO MAKE INTO *SOMETHING* WONDERFUL.

THAT'S ME DARLING GIRL...

WHAT ARE YOU *MAKING* HIM, THEN?

I CAN'T SAY THAT I'M ENTIRELY *CERTAIN*, MY POPSY. BUT IT'S A FINE YARN, AND I DON'T DOUBT THAT IT'LL SUIT.

GO WITH *ANYTHING*, THIS WILL.

HE COULD BE A POET IN A LOVELY SCARF, PERHAPS.

OR A FISHERMAN IN HIS SPECIAL WOOLLY SWEATER.

OR A HUNTER IN HIS NICE THICK SOCKS. I'LL MAKE HIM *SOMETHING* NICE.

AND *THERE'S* A START TO IT, MY DEARYDUCK.

TEA?

I'D LOVE A CUP, MY DOVE.

AND FOR ME.

TEA FOR THREE, THEN.

CAN'T SAY I'VE EVER BEEN TOO FOND OF BEGINNINGS, MYSELF. *MESSY* LITTLE THINGS. GIVE ME A GOOD ENDING ANY TIME. YOU KNOW WHERE YOU *ARE* WITH AN ENDING.

WHOOSH!

NOW THEN, YOU MUSTN'T *SAY* THINGS LIKE THAT. YOU *KNOW* YOU DON'T MEAN THEM.

PURL ONE, PLAIN ONE, PURL TWO TOGETHER...

WHY, THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT MAKING THINGS FOR PEOPLE. YOU CAN START OFF IN BIRMINGHAM AND FINISH IN, WELL, TANGANYIKA OR SOMEWHERE.

THAT'S NOT MESSY, MY CHERUB. THAT'S *EXCITING.*

EXCITING MY AUNT BANANA!

WHAT'S SO EXCITING ABOUT IT?

WELL, EVERY ONE WE MAKE'S UNIQUE. NEVER SEEN BEFORE, NEVER SEEN AGAIN.

TEA

HMMPH. I DON'T KNOW WHY *THAT'S* EXCITING. IT'S NOT LIKE ANYONE *NOTICES* WHAT WE DO. NOT LIKE ANYONE *CARES.*

AND THEY'RE ALWAYS *COMPLAINING*: THEY DON'T LIKE THE FIT OF IT; TOO LOOSE-- TOO TIGHT-- TOO DIFFERENT-- TOO MUCH LIKE EVERYONE ELSE'S.

IT'S NEVER WHAT THEY WANT, AND IF WE *GIVE* THEM WHAT THEY THINK THEY WANT THEY LIKE IT LESS THAN EVER.

"I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD BE LIKE THIS." "WHY CAN'T IT BE LIKE THE ONE I HAD BEFORE?"

I DON'T KNOW WHY WE BOTHER.

WE BOTHER BECAUSE WE HAVE NO CHOICE. BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT WE ARE, IN THIS ASPECT.

HMMPH. WHO WANTS WHAT WITH THEIR TEA, THEN?

WHAT DO WE HAVE?

WE'VE GOT GINGER SNAPS, FLORENTINES, SPONGE CAKE AND FORTUNE COOKIES.

AND... WELL I NEVER, THERE'S A MOUSE IN THE TRAP. AFTER THE GINGER SNAPS, *I'LL* BE BOUND.

I'LL HAVE A GINGERSNAP, PLEASE.

I'LL TAKE A FORTUNE COOKIE, I THINK, MY PETAL.

:SNF: THEN I'LL HAVE THE MOUSE.

RIGHT. TEA'S READY.

READ ME THE FORTUNE, WILL YOU, POPPET? I WANT TO FINISH THIS FIRST.

I *DO* LOVE TO HEAR FORTUNES.

"A KING WILL FORSAKE HIS KINGDOM; LIFE AND DEATH WILL CLASH AND FRAY; THE OLDEST BATTLE BEGINS ONCE MORE."

WE'VE HAD THAT ONE *BEFORE*, HAVEN'T WE?

IT'S DEFINITELY FAMILIAR, DEARIE.

RIGHT. I THINK *THAT* ONE'S GONE ON LONG ENOUGH.

DO YOU THINK SO? I RATHER *LIKE* THIS ONE. I THOUGHT MAYBE IT COULD BE A LITTLE LONGER...

YOU'RE TOO *SOFT*. BOTH OF YOU. MUCH TOO SOFT.

ALL GOOD THINGS, EH? ALL GOOD THINGS...

GOT TO FINISH SOMETIME.

SNIP

SAND!

THERE'S SAND ALL OVER THE BED. WHY, YOU, YOU LITTLE--

LYTA, HONEY, CALM DOWN.

I'M SORRY, CARLA. BUT JUST LOOK AT THIS.

IT'S SAND. SO?

SO, DANIEL WAS SLEEPING IN MY BED. I PUT HIM DOWN FOR HIS NAP, THERE.

NEXT THING YOU KNOW, THE SHEETS ARE COVERED WITH SAND.

WELL, SO HE MUST'VE BEEN PLAYING IN A SANDBOX OR SOMETHING.

YOU KNOW KIDS. ALWAYS FILLING THEIR POCKETS WITH STUFF.

MY KID BROTHER, JORDAN, HIS KID BROUGHT ALL THESE TINY LITTLE FROGS INTO THE HOUSE. WE NEVER FIGURED OUT HOW, MUST'VE FOUND THEM IN THE GARDEN OR SOMETHING.

NEXT THING YOU KNOW, THE WHOLE HOUSE IS CRAWLING WITH THESE TEENY TINY LITTLE FELLAS.

HOP, RIBBIT! HOP, RIBBIT!

Hop wibbif. Hof wibby.

CAN YOU SAY FROG? HUH, DANIEL? FROGGIE?

Hob wibble.

YOU STILL UPSET? C'MON, HON. IT'S NOT AS IF HE DID IT ON *PURPOSE* OR NOTHIN'. IT'S JUST SAND.

BUT HE *HASN'T* BEEN PLAYING IN THE SANDBOX.

LYTA, GIRL. *LOOK.* HOW ABOUT IF WE TAKE HIM OUT FOR A WALK. *HUH?* WE COULD GET SOME ICE CREAM?

Icecweam?

UH-UH. CARLA. NO *WAY.* I'M TRYING TO DIET.

NO PROBLEM. *YOU* CAN HAVE SOME OF THAT FROZEN YOGURT SHIT, AND WATCH *ME* GORGE MY FACE ON DOUBLE-CHOCOLATE CHIP. YOU WANT ICE CREAM, DANIEL? HUH?

Icecweam! Icecweam! Icecweam!

♪ ONE SHOE OFF AND ONE SHOE ON. ♪ ♪ HEY, DIDDLE DIDDLE, ♪ THE CAT AND THE FIDDLE. HERE'S A FLOWER FOR A PRETTY LADY.

♪ THE COW JUMPED OVER THE MOON. ♪

MUST'VE BEEN A MIGHTY FINE JUMPER, THAT OLD COW. MOON'S A LONG WAY UP, AND IT'S AWFUL COLD.

♪ LITTLE DOG ♩ LAUGHED TO SEE... ♪

WHAT DO I SEE?

HELLO, LITTLE BOY. YOU WANT A FLOWER, HUH? PRETTY FLOWER?

GET AWAY FROM HIM.

JUST A PRETTY FLOWER, PRETTY LADY? I THINK HE LIKES IT.

♪ ANNA DISH RANNA WAY WITHA SPOOOON. ♪

YOU. GET. AWAY. FROM MY SON. OR YOU'LL--YOU'LL--YOU DON'T TOUCH MY SON--

UNDER-STAND ME?

I...

I'M--AHHH--I--UH--HH--I--SNFFFF--AHHHH-AHHHH...

YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO DO THAT. HE'S JUST A HARMLESS CRAZY.

I'VE SEEN HIM DOWN HERE A DOZEN TIMES, GIVIN' OUT HIS FLOWERS, OR BEGGING FOR A LIGHT, OR FOR CHANGE.

LYTA, YOU'RE SHAKING.

I AM? MAYBE I'M JUST UNDER PRESSURE.

YEAH. MAYBE.

I--I OVERREACTED, DIDN'T I?

UH-HUH.

TWO SCOOPS OF CHOCOLATE-CHOCOLATE CHIP, A SCOOP OF THAT PINK YOGURT SHIT FOR MY FRIEND AND SOME VANILLA FOR THE KID.

Pint yodurt ship

CARLA, PLEASE. LANGUAGE.

YOU THOUGHT ANY MORE ABOUT TAKING ERIC UP ON THE JOB OFFER?

HE DOESN'T NEED AN *ASSISTANT*. HE JUST WANTS TO GET INTO MY *PANTS*.

HONEY, YOU *KNOW* THAT ISN'T TRUE.

YEAH. *MAY*BE. I JUST WOULDN'T FEEL GOOD ABOUT LEAVING DANIEL ALONE.

SO YOU GET A *BABY*SITTER. *YOU* CAN AFFORD IT.

I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE I'M OVERPROTECTIVE OR SOMETHING. BUT I DON'T WANT TO LET HIM OUT OF MY SIGHT.

98% AT FREE!

SOMETIMES... WHEN HE'S SLEEPING... I GO IN THERE, AND JUST WATCH HIM, LISTEN TO HIM BREATHE.

JEEESUS, DANIEL.

I SUPPOSE IT'S LIKE HE'S ALL YOU HAVE LEFT OF HECTOR. IT'S KIND OF *NATURAL* YOU'D BE, WELL, A LITTLE BIT CAREFUL.

MM. MAYBE.

I DON'T KNOW.

DANIEL, CAN'T YOU EVEN STAY CLEAN FOR JUST *FIVE* MINUTES?

BUT IF ANYTHING *HAPPENED* TO HIM. IF *ANYONE* HURT HIM, IF *ANYTHING* HAPPENED...

YEAH, I KNOW. IF ANYTHING HAPPENED YOU'D JUST *DIE*.

I WOULDN'T *DIE*, CARLA.

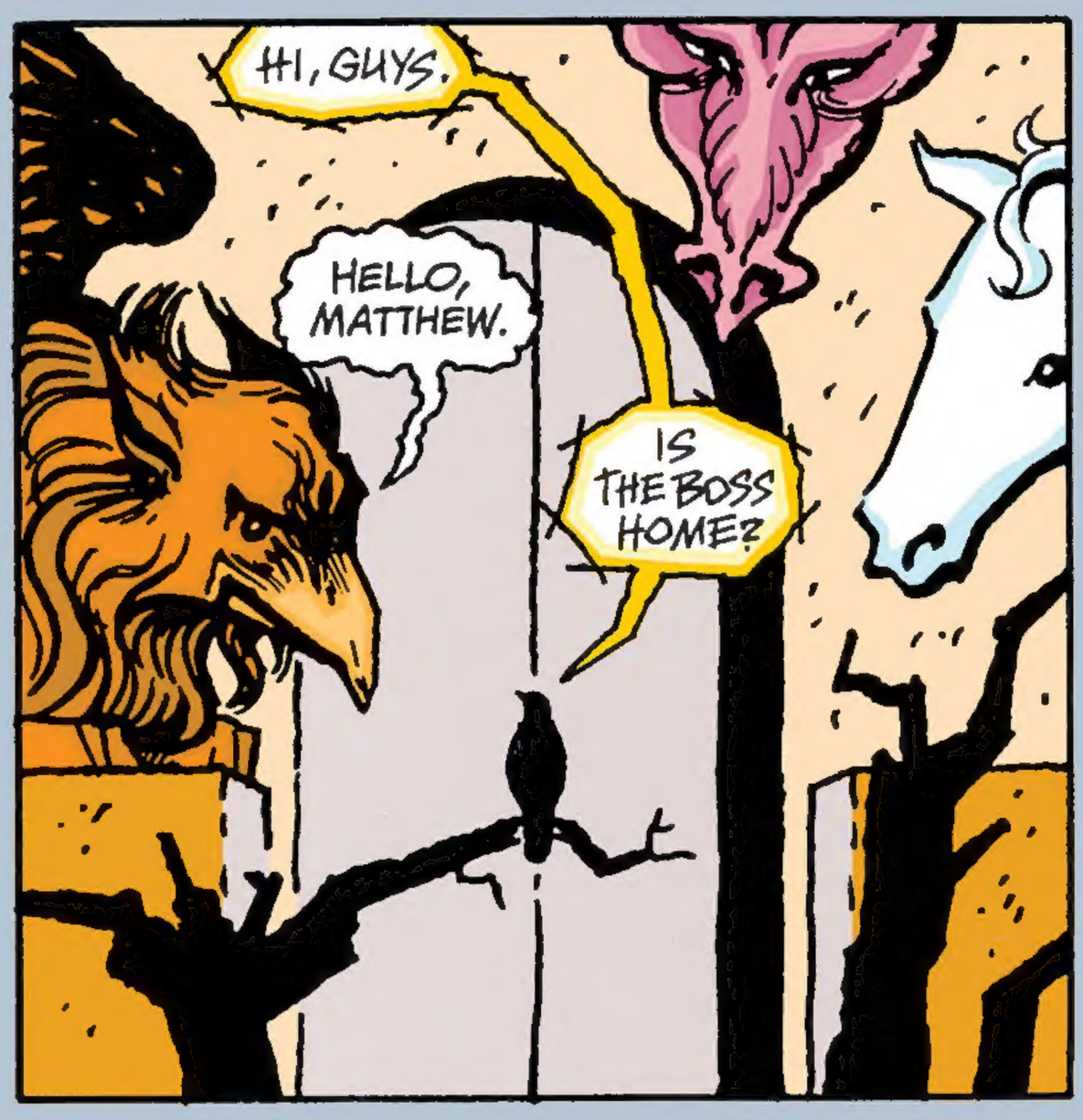
IF ANYONE HURT DANIEL, I'D *KILL* THEM.

THE KINDLY ONES! 1

WRITTEN BY
NEIL GAIMAN

DRAWN BY
MARC HEMPEL

LETTERED BY TODD KLEIN
COLORED BY DANIEL VOZZO
EDITED BY KAREN BERGER
ASSISTED BY SHELLY ROEBERG
SANDMAN CHARACTERS CREATED
BY GAIMAN, KIETH & DRINGENBERG



CERTAINLY.

IT'S JUST HE HASN'T SENT FOR ME IN A WHILE. I FIGURED MAYBE HE WAS TRAVELLING OR SOMETHING.

NO. HE IS IN RESIDENCE.

OH.

WELL. I'LL BE GOING IN, THEN.

THE DOOR WILL OPEN FOR YOU, MATTHEW. YOU ARE WELCOME HERE.

HEY.

Y'KNOW.

I WAS WONDERING.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU GUYS BEEN DOING THIS GIG? THIS GUARDING THE DOOR BIT? I MEAN, HAVE YOU ALWAYS DONE THIS? OR DID YOU DO ANYTHING BEFORE?

I MEAN, WERE YOU PEOPLE OR SOMETHING?

WE WERE ALWAYS AS WE ARE. A GRYPHON, A WYVERN, A HIPPOGRIFF.

YEAH? SO YOU'VE ALWAYS GUARDED THE DOOR TO THE CASTLE?

WE ARE DOORKEEPERS, MATTHEW.

WE TAKE OUR STRENGTH AND OUR AUTHORITY FROM OUR LORD. WHEN HE WAS IMPRISONED AND POWERLESS, SO WERE WE.

THAT WASN'T QUITE WHAT I MEANT. I WAS WONDERING MORE ABOUT HOW YOU GOT INTO THIS GAME.

THERE ARE NO GRYPHONS, NO WYVERNS, NO WINGED HORSES IN THE WAKING WORLD, RAVEN. NOT ANYMORE. BUT WE ARE HERE...

I... YEAH. FINE. SO HOW'S THE BOSS DOING, THEN?

HE IS PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF TELLING YOU THAT HIMSELF, RAVEN.

HEY, MERV.

HEY, MATTHEW. HOW'S IT HANGING?

HOW'S WHAT HANGING? I HAVEN'T HAD ANY-THING HANGING SINCE I WAS ALIVE.

HEY, NO OFFENSE MEANT. IT'S JUST A FIGURE OF SPEECH, Y'KNOW. IT'S THE KIND OF THING US GUYS SAY TO EACH OTHER. JEEZ, IT'S NOT LIKE I MEANT ANYTHING OR ANYTHING.

UH, RIGHT. LISTEN, MERV, YOU SEEN ANYTHING OF THE BOSS RECENTLY?

JUST THE USUAL.

"MERVYN, BUILD AN OCEAN OVER HERE, KNOCK DOWN THAT CITY UNDER THE WILLOW TREE OVER THERE. AND INCIDENTALLY, MERVYN, THIS TIME REMEMBER THAT ICE IS CUSTOMARILY COLD."

LIKE I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO DO. I TELLYA, SOMETIMES I COULD JUST TELL HIM WHERE TO STICK HIS GODDAMN JOB.

SO, UH, MERV. YOU'VE BEEN AROUND A WHILE. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE RAVENS BEFORE ME?

LIKE I'M GOING TO FORGET THEM? ALWAYS DROPPING FEATHERS IN THE HALLS AND SHITTIN' ON MY CLEAN FLOORS AND, JEEZUS, THE STUFF YOU BIRDS EAT.

NOT THAT I'M PREJUDICED OR NOTHIN'.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM, MERVYN? HOW DID THEY... LEAVE?

WHO HAS TIME TO KEEP TRACK OF YOU PEOPLE? SOME OF US HAVE REAL JOBS, BIRDIE.

WE CAN'T ALL PERCH ON THE BOSS'S SHOULDER, LIVE IN A CAVE, EAT DEAD RATS AND CRAP ON THE FLOOR.

RIGHT?

HEY, LISTEN, WHEN YOU SEE THE BOSS, YOU WON'T TELL HIM WHAT I SAID ABOUT THE JOB.

HE'D, Y'KNOW.

I MEAN, WE KNOW I'M A KIDDER, YOU AND ME, IT'S A GUY THING, BUT HE MIGHT, I DUNNO, TAKE IT THE WRONG WAY.

YEAH. RIGHT. NO PROBLEM.

HEY, NUALA.

HELLO, MATTHEW.

I THOUGHT MAYBE THE BOSS WOULD BE HERE.

NO. HE ISN'T HERE. I HAVEN'T SEEN LORD MORPHEUS FOR SOME TIME. I DON'T KNOW *WHERE* HE IS, REALLY.

BUT I'M KEEPING THE THRONE ROOM NICE AND CLEAN. FOR WHEN HE COMES BACK.

RIGHT.

NUALA?

WHY DO YOU DO THIS STUFF? ALL THIS CLEANING AND POLISHING? I MEAN, DOES HE *MAKE* YOU DO IT?

MAKE ME DO IT? NO. LORD MORPHEUS HAS NEVER... ASKED *ANY*THING OF ME...

THEN WHY DO YOU *DO* IT?

I HAVE TO DO *SOME*-THING.

HI, LUCIEN.

MATTHEW.

WHATCHA READING?

AN UNWRITTEN PLAY BY JOHN WEBSTER. A BANQUET FOR THE WORMES.

ANY GOOD?

YES. VERY GOOD. "WEBSTER WAS MUCH POSSESSED BY DEATH AND SAW THE SKULL BENEATH THE SKIN." HE DID, YOU KNOW. HE REALLY DID.

YEAH? YOU MEAN LIKE HE HAD SOME KIND OF X-RAY VISION?

NO, NOTHING LIKE THAT.

I WAS KIND OF WONDERING. HAVE YOU GOT ANY BOOKS HERE ON RAVENS?

CERTAINLY. MANY THOUSANDS OF THEM.

WELL, COULD I, LIKE, CHECK ONE OUT SOME TIME OR SOMETHING?

CERTAINLY.

SO, UH, WHERE'S THE BOSS?

HE'S WORKING, MATTHEW.

RIGHT.

SO WHERE'S HE WORKING?

LOOK, LUCIEN, I WANT TO TALK TO HIM. IT'S BEEN, WHAT, TWO MONTHS? SIX? A YEAR?

TIME'S SO SCREWY IN THIS PLACE.

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS LIKE A HUNDRED YEARS SINCE I DIED.

LUCIEN? WERE YOU EVER ALIVE?

I DON'T THINK SO, NO.

YOU DON'T THINK SO?

I CAN REMEMBER THE TITLE, AUTHOR, AND LOCATION OF EVERY BOOK IN THIS LIBRARY, MATTHEW.

EVERY BOOK THAT'S EVER BEEN *DREAMED*. EVERY BOOK THAT'S EVER BEEN IMAGINED. EVERY BOOK THAT'S EVER BEEN *LOST*.

MILLIONS UPON MILLIONS OF THEM.

THAT'S WHAT I REMEMBER. IT'S MY *JOB*. OTHER THINGS...I FORGET SOMETIMES.

HE'S DOWN BY THE *SHORE*, MATTHEW.

MAKING NIGHTMARES.

Matthew?

I do not recall sending for you.

I KNOW THAT, BOSS.

Well?

WELL, IT'S BEEN A WHILE. I WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

Worried?

About me?

WHAT'RE YOU MAKING, THEN?

A nightmare.

I KINDA FIGURED THAT.

I am making the Corinthian.

YOU'RE WHAT?

Making the Corinthian once more.

I made the first one a long time ago, Matthew. Before poor Orpheus was born, I crafted him. Now I craft another.

WHY?

Why?

THAT'S WHAT I SAID. WHY? I MEAN, YOU ALREADY HAD TO DESTROY HIM ONCE...

SEEMS KIND OF... ODD... TO START HIM OFF AGAIN.

I created the Corinthian to be the dark mirror of humanity, Matthew.

A dark mirror.

Imagine that you woke in the night and rose, and seemed to see before you another person, whom slowly you perceived to be yourself.

Someone had entered in the night and placed a mirror in your sleeping place, made from a black metal.

You had been frightened only of your reflection.

But then the reflection slowly raised one hand, while your own hand stayed still...

A dark mirror...

That was always the intention...

But the gulf between conception and execution is wide, and many things can happen on the way.

I DON'T THINK I EVER HEARD YOU TALK SO MUCH. NOT AT ONE TIME.

No?

Walk with me, Matthew.

It is rare that I return to a previous theme...

AREN'T YOU WORRIED?

Of what?

I DON'T KNOW. OF WHAT IT'S GOING TO DO. THE LAST CORINTHIAN TRIED TO KILL YOU.

The last Corinthian was a fool. This one will not be.

NO MORE OF THAT KILLING-PEOPLE-AND-EATING-THEIR-EYES SHIT?

The Corinthian was not intended to be a reassuring dream, Matthew.

SO WHY DID YOU DESTROY IT?

Sometimes dreams go bad, Matthew. I have known a few in my time.

Certain of them I removed from the body of the dreaming; others I uncreated.

BOSS?

Matthew?

WHEN I WAS IN THAT CAR WITH YOUR LITTLE SISTER, SHE SAID THERE'D BEEN ELEVEN OR TWELVE OTHER RAVENS. REMEMBER?

There have been rather more than that, Matthew.

AND SHE SAID THAT ONE OF THEM WENT BACK TO BEING A MAN AGAIN.

Aristeus of Marmora? Yes, briefly. It was what he thought he wanted. But it did not last.

Y'KNOW, I WAS ASKING EVE WHAT HAPPENS TO US RAVENS, IN THE END. WHEN WE'RE NOT IN THE DREAMING ANYMORE.

AND SHE WOULDN'T TELL ME, IF SHE KNEW.

Indeed?

That is as it should be, Matthew.

UH-HUH.

You may return to Eve's cave, Matthew. I shall send for you, if I have need of you.

BUT--

GO NOW.

KAAAAARK.

I FOUND HIM, EVE. WE TALKED SOME.

AND?

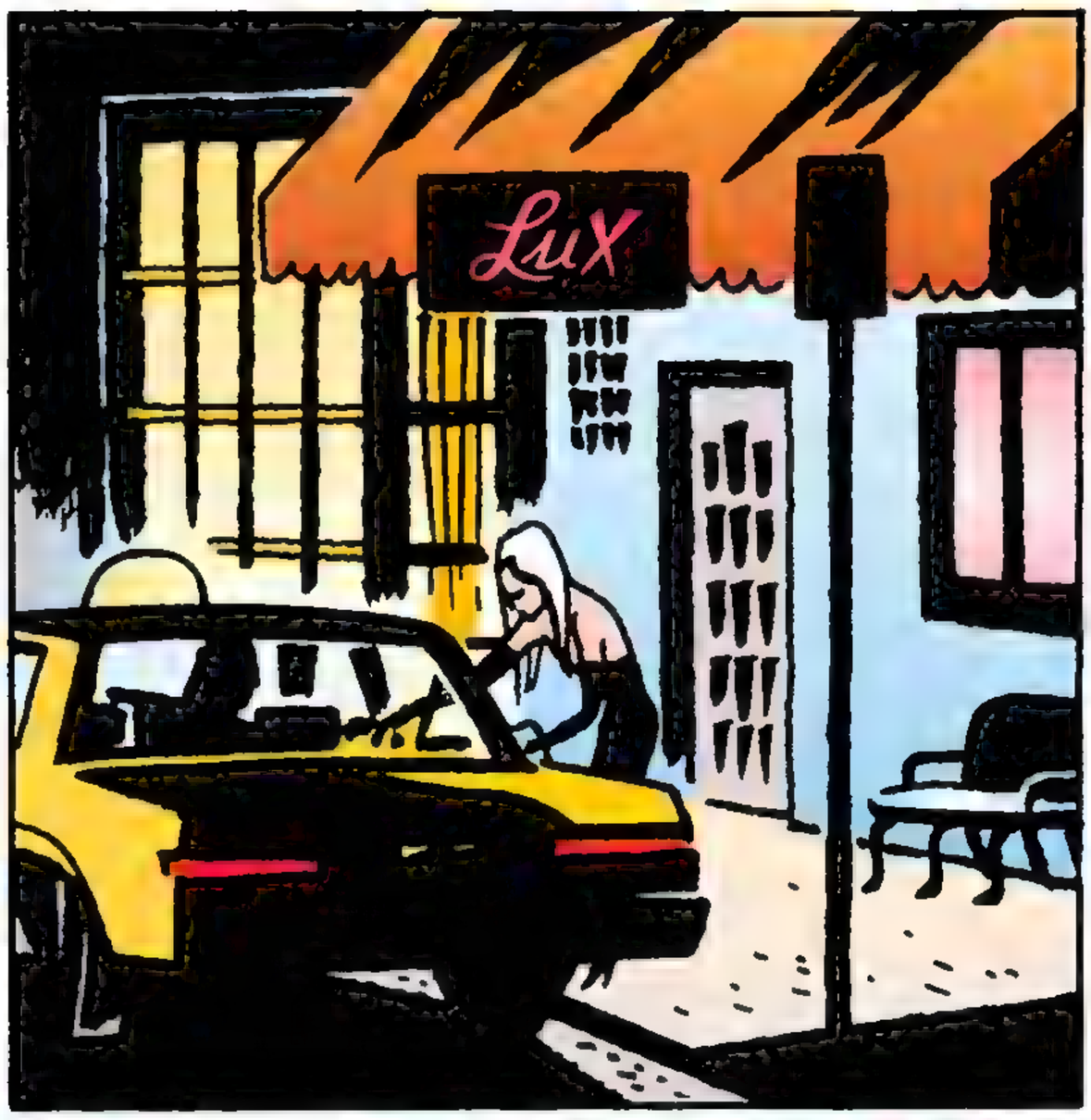
WE TALKED. THAT'S ALL. LISTEN, I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.

YOU'RE BROODING, LITTLE RAVEN.

I SAID I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.

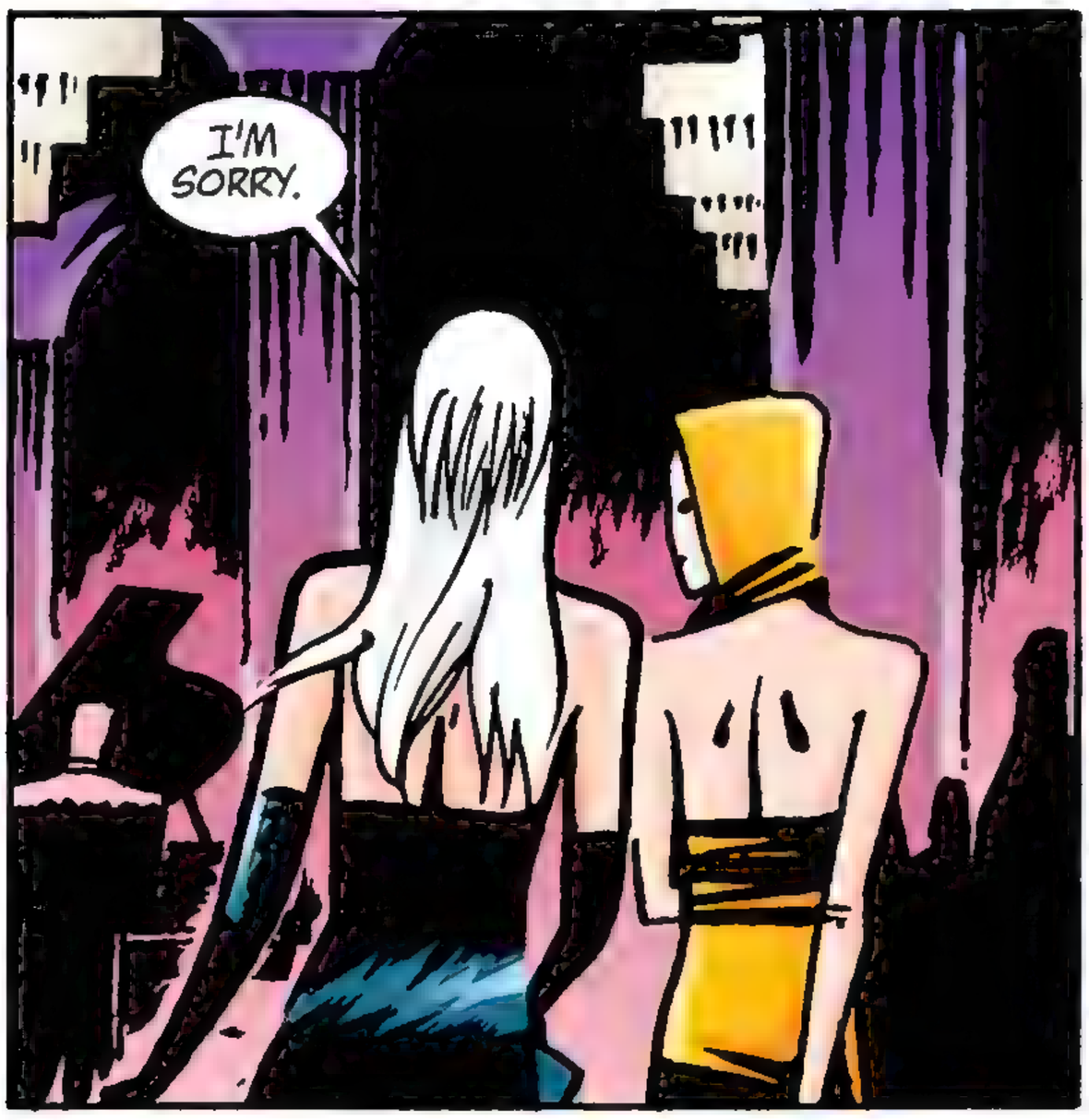
HONESTLY.

MEN.


Lux

HELLO. I'M LYTA HALL.
I'M EXPECTED.
MR. NEEDHAM IS EXPECTING ME.

CAN'T YOU TALK?


I'M SORRY.

LYTA HALL. YOU KNOW, I ALMOST DIDN'T BELIEVE YOU WERE REALLY GOING TO SHOW.
THIS IS SUCH A PLEASURE.

HELLO, ERIC.

WELL, I'M *DELIGHTED* CARLA FINALLY CONVINCED YOU THAT WE SHOULD TALK FACE TO FACE.

PLEASE, TAKE A SEAT.

SO. HAVE YOU BEEN HERE BEFORE?

NO. I DON'T GET OUT MUCH.

WELL, *I* LIKE IT BECAUSE IT'S NOT AN L.A. PLACE. NO OFFENSE, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING *ABOUT* L.A. PLACES.

GOOD OLD LA-LA-LAND. PEOPLE WANT TO BE *SEEN* IN THIS TOWN.

Y'KNOW LUX'S HAS A NO PORTABLE PHONE POLICY. PRETTY *COOL*, HUH? DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE EISNER OR OVITZ OR WHOEVER. NO PORTABLES. OR BEEPERS.

YOU'RE LOOKING TERRIFIC. YOU KNOW THAT?

UM. THANKS.

THAT *SONG* HE'S PLAYING. IT WAS MY LATE HUSBAND'S FAVORITE SONG.

♪ A ♩ CIGARETTE THAT BEARS LIPSTICK ♫ TRACES ... AN AIRLINE TICKET TO ROMANTIC ♪ PLACES... ♪

SOMETHING TO DRINK?

TOMATO JUICE, PLEASE.

STOLI AND CRANBERRY JUICE FOR ME, PLEASE. AND A VIRGIN MARY FOR THE LADY.

A *WHAT*?

IT'S A BLOODY MARY, JUST WITHOUT THE VODKA.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO SAY WITHOUT THE BLOOD.

NO.

SO.

SO.

SO... SUPPOSING YOU TELL ME ALL ABOUT YOURSELF.

YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT ME, ERIC. YOU WOULDN'T BE TRYING TO *HIRE* ME IF YOU DIDN'T.

YOU NEVER SPOKE A TRUER WORD. I'VE GOT THE LYTA HALL DOSSIER IN MY BRIEFCASE.

SO WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS JOB OFFER ABOUT? WHAT KIND OF ASSISTANT DO YOU NEED?

WE'LL *COME* TO THAT, LYTA. THE NIGHT IS *YOUNG*. AND HERE ARE OUR DRINKS.

THE TWENTY'S ALL FOR YOU, GORGEOUS. SPEND IT ON SOMETHING *FUN*, OKAY?

COOL IDEA, HUH? SILENT WAITRESSES.

I THOUGHT SHE WAS ACTUALLY DUMB.

MAYBE. ANY-WAY IT GETS HER GOOD TIPS FROM ME. WHO WANTS TO HEAR WOMEN *TALK* ALL THE TIME?

WHAT...?

HEY--DON'T YOU GO PUTTING WORDS INTO MY MOUTH, LITTLE LADY. NOT *JUST* WOMEN. PEOPLE.

PEOPLE TALK *ALL* THE TIME. I MEAN, DON'T YOU JUST *HATE* A VERBOSE WAITER?

NOT REALLY.

CHEERS.

HERE'S TO BUSINESS, AND THE FUTURE.

CLINK!

SO. WHAT'S IN THE LYTA HALL DOSSIER?

YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW?

WELL, YOU WERE BORN SOMETIME AROUND 1960. MOTHER WAS THE GREEK-BORN SUPERHEROINE WHO CALLED HERSELF THE FURY.

NO MENTION HERE OF WHO YOUR FATHER WAS.

AS AN INFANT YOU WERE ENTRUSTED TO A VIRGINIAN COUPLE, THE TREVORS.

THEY FORMALLY ADOPTED YOU ABOUT FIVE YEARS LATER, WHEN IT BECAME APPARENT THAT, WHEREVER YOUR MOTHER HAD GONE, SHE *WASN'T* COMING BACK.

HALL

YOUR CHILDHOOD SWEETHEART WAS A KID CALLED HECTOR HALL. YOU FOLLOWED HIM TO ***UCLA***, THEN THE TWO OF YOU WORKED AS PART OF ONE OF THOSE ***HERO GROUPS*** FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

YOU ***ALSO*** CALLED YOURSELF THE FURY.

YOU WERE ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED.

HECTOR HALL ***DIED*** IN 1987, LEAVING YOU PREGNANT. YOU ***MARRIED*** HIM IN EARLY 1988. THAT'S KIND OF ***STRANGE***, Y'KNOW?

YES.

THEN YOU ***VANISHED*** FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS. REAPPEARED A FEW YEARS BACK, ***STILL*** PREGNANT. NO MORE HECTOR. HAD A BABY--

DANIEL.

DANIEL. YES.

AND YOU'VE BEEN A ***MOM*** EVER SINCE.

YOU KNOW, THAT'S A PRETTY ***AMAZING*** LIFE STORY.

SOMEONE WHO'D TURN THEIR BACK ON STARDOM AND A VIRGINIA MANSION TO RAISE A BABY IN A TINY L.A. APARTMENT.

LISTEN. YOU ***KNOW*** THE MEDIA. YOU KNOW THE L.A. SOCIAL SCENE. YOU ***LOOK*** GOOD AND I WANT YOU WORKING FOR ***ME***.

LIKE I SAID BEFORE. DOING EXACTLY ***WHAT***?

WELL, OUR WEST COAST OPERATION IS JUST EXPANDING AND EXPAND-ING. MARKETING. INTERACTIVE MEDIA. PRODUCTION. MANAGE-MENT. THE WHOLE ***SHEBANG***.

I FIGURE YOU GET TO WRITE YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION. SEND IT TO ME. I'LL SIGN IT.

THEN YOU PICK A SALARY. TELL ME WHAT IT IS, AND I'LL INITIAL IT.

YOU MAKE IT SOUND LIKE THE KIND OF DEAL I OUGHT TO SIGN IN ***BLOOD***.

HA-HA-HA...

I...I DON'T KNOW. IT'S A ***WONDERFUL-SOUNDING*** OFFER.

BUT IT ***WOULD*** MEAN SPENDING TIME AWAY FROM DANIEL...

WELL, MAYBE A ***LITTLE***. BUT IF YOU WANT AN IN-OFFICE CRECHE AND CAREGIVER, THAT COULD BE ARRANGED.

OKAY. LET'S HOLD OFF ON THE BUSINESS. ***I'M*** READY TO ORDER. ARE YOU READY TO ORDER?

LUX MENU

HEY, MAC. WILL YOU PLAY "MEMORIES"? FOR MY GOOD LADY OVER THERE. FROM "CATS"? HER NAME'S VONDA.

Y'KNOW, "MIIIIDNIGHT, ♫ ALL ALONE ONNA PAAAAAVEMENT..." THAT ONE. ♫ ♫

no.

NO, I'M AFRAID NOT. IT IS A SONG I FIND ENTIRELY DEVOID OF INTEREST.

THE MELODY IS TRITE, WHILE THE AWKWARD PARAPHRASES OF LESSER ELIOT POEMS IN THE LYRICS ARE GRATING IN THE EXTREME.

HEY, BUD. HERE'S FIFTY DOLLARS SAYS YOU'LL PLAY IT. IT'S HER BIRTHDAY AND AFTER "MEMORIES," HOW ABOUT "HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO VONDA"?

I WILL NOT PLAY "MEMORIES", AND I CANNOT BE BOTHERED TO LIE. VONDA'S BIRTHDAY WILL BE FAR FROM HAPPY.

"HOWEVER, I WILL PLAY SOMETHING APPROPRIATE ENOUGH, CONSIDERING HOW THIS EVENING WILL END FOR YOU BOTH."

HARVEY? IS HE GOING TO PLAY "MEMORIES"? WHAT DID HE SAY?

I, UH, WELL, I ASKED HIM...

THIS SONG IS FOR A YOUNG LADY NAMED VONDA WHO'S HAVING A BIRTHDAY TONIGHT.

♪ I DREAMED LAST NIGHT ♫ I WAS ON THE BOAT TO HEAVEN, AND BY SOME CHANCE I HAD ♪ BROUGHT MY DICE ALONG... ♫

I LOVE THIS SONG, HARVEY. WHAT A LOVELY IDEA.

AND THE PEOPLE ALL SAID SIDDOWN, SIDDOWN YOU'RE ROCKING THE BOAT... PEOPLE ALL SAID SIDDOWN...SIDDOWN YOU'RE ROCKING THE BOAT.

YOU KNOW, I GOTTA SAY THIS GUY'S ABOUT THE ONLY GOOD NIGHTCLUB PIANIST I'VE EVER HEARD.

THEY MUST PAY HIM A BOMB. AND MOSTLY I DON'T LIKE SHOWTUNES.

KLINK

ERIC? I HAVE TO LEAVE. THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG? CAN'T IT WAIT UNTIL AFTER DINNER?

THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG AT HOME, ERIC. MAKE THEM GET ME A TAXI.

UH, LYTA, LOOK, WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU WENT OUT TO DINNER? LEFT DANIEL AT HOME? A YEAR AGO?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

OKAY. LOOK, YOU GO AND PHONE HOME FROM THE LOBBY. IF EVERYTHING'S OKAY, WE FINISH OUR DINNER LIKE CIVILIZED PEOPLE. IF THERE'S ANYTHING WRONG I'LL DRIVE YOU HOME.

THERE'S NO ANSWER.

DRIVE ME HOME.

NOW.

HERE YOU GO, HON. THIS SHOULD COVER IT, AND TAKE SOMETHING FOR YOURSELF OUT OF IT, OKAY?

COME. ON.

YEAH. I'M COMING. HAVE THEY BROUGHT THE CAR ROUND YET?

UH. UH.

LOOK, IT'S PROBABLY NOTHING. MAYBE THE BABYSITTER DIDN'T HEAR THE PHONE. SHE PROBABLY FELL *ASLEEP* OR SOMETHING.

THERE'S THE CAR.

CAN'T YOU GO ANY *FASTER*?

IT'S *RAINING*, LYTA. I'M GOING AS FAST AS I CAN. I TELL YOU, IF WE GOT STOPPED AND TICKETED, WE'D LOSE MORE TIME.

WHAT *IS* IT WITH THIS TOWN? A LITTLE RAIN COMES DOWN, NEXT THING YOU KNOW, EVERYBODY FORGETS HOW TO *DRIVE*.

LOOK AT THAT GUY. HE CAN'T BE *GOING* FASTER THAN 15 MILES AN HOUR. I MEAN, IT'S *JUST* A LITTLE WATER, YOU'D THINK IT WAS--

ERIC. SHUT THE F...

JUST *DRIVE*, OKAY?

SCREECH!

RATTLE RATTLE

ERIC? HE'S GONE.

DANIEL'S GONE.

THEY TOOK MY BABY.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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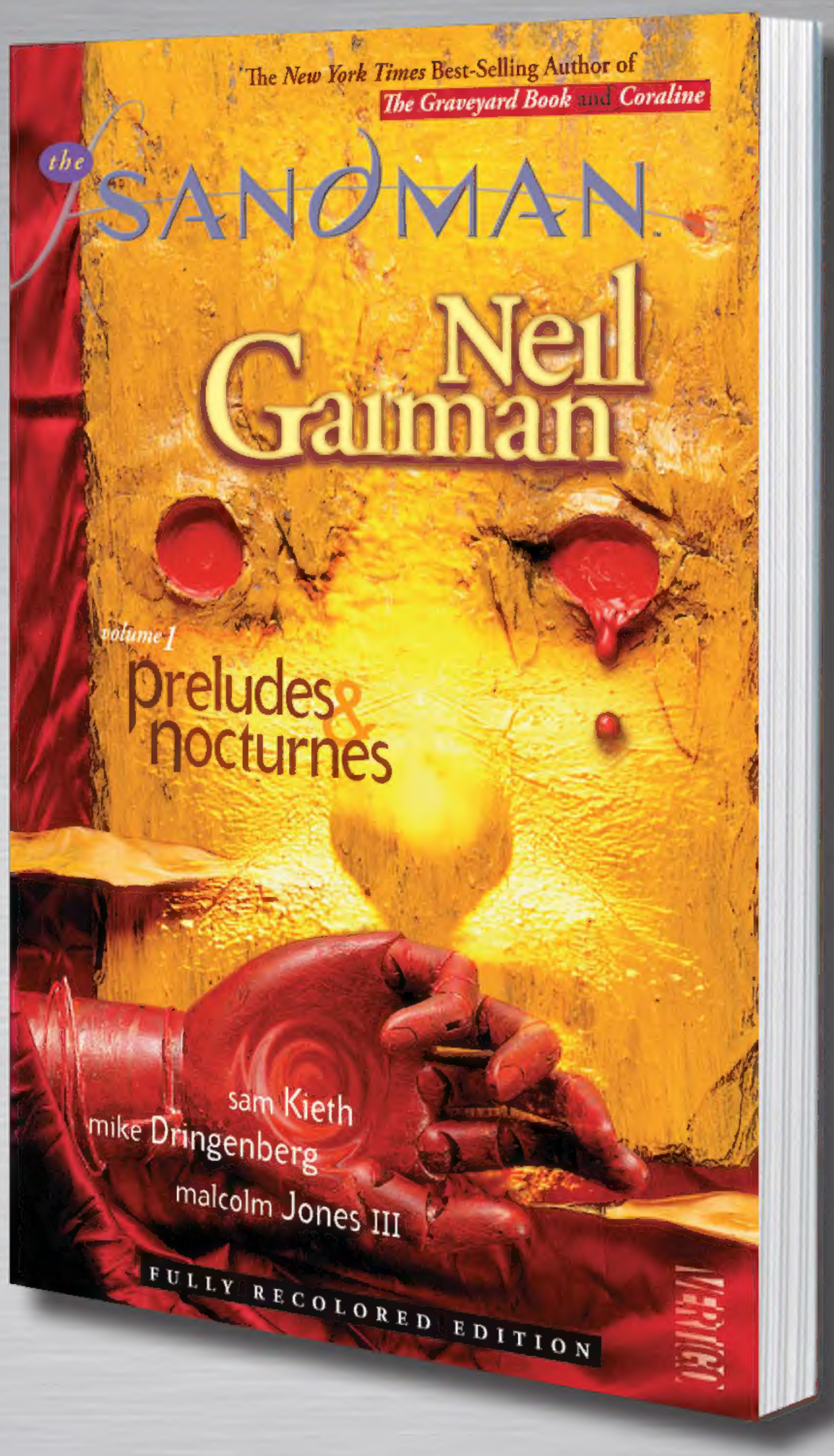

THE SANDMAN VOL. 4:
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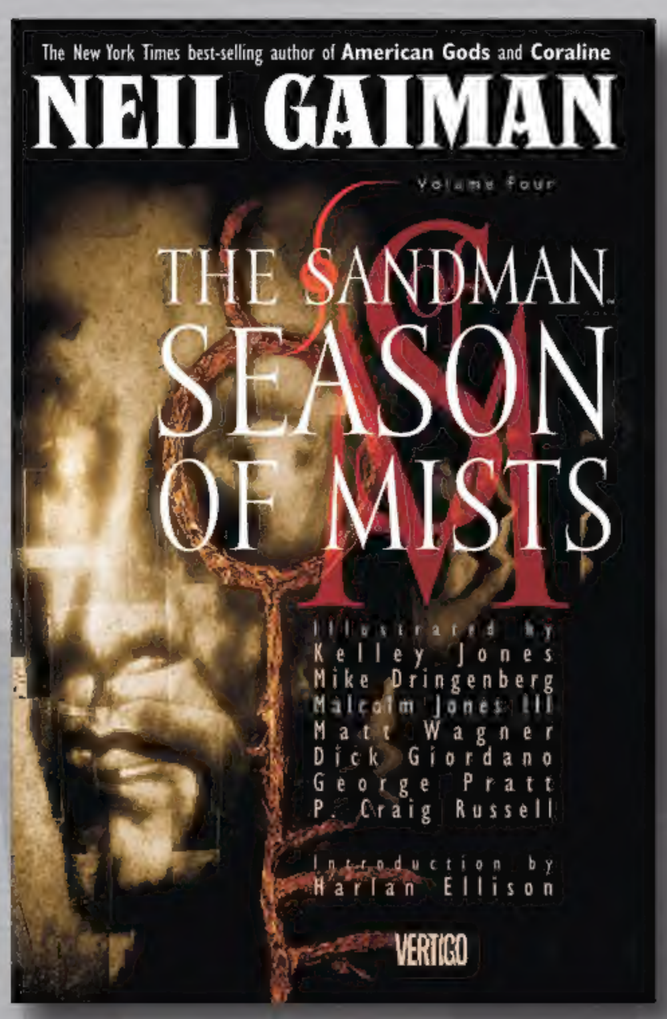

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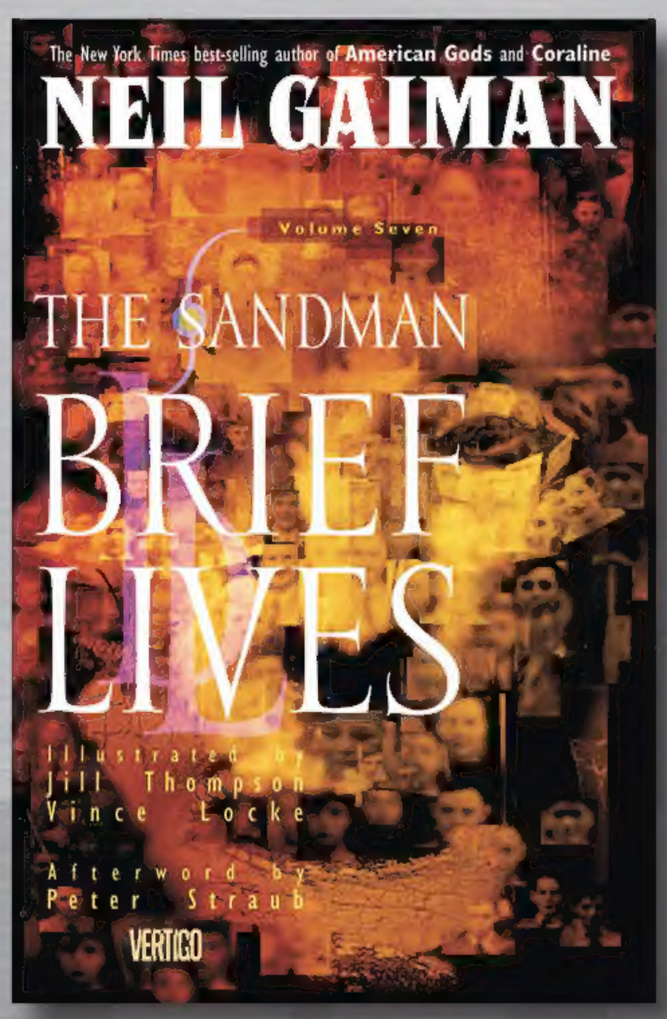

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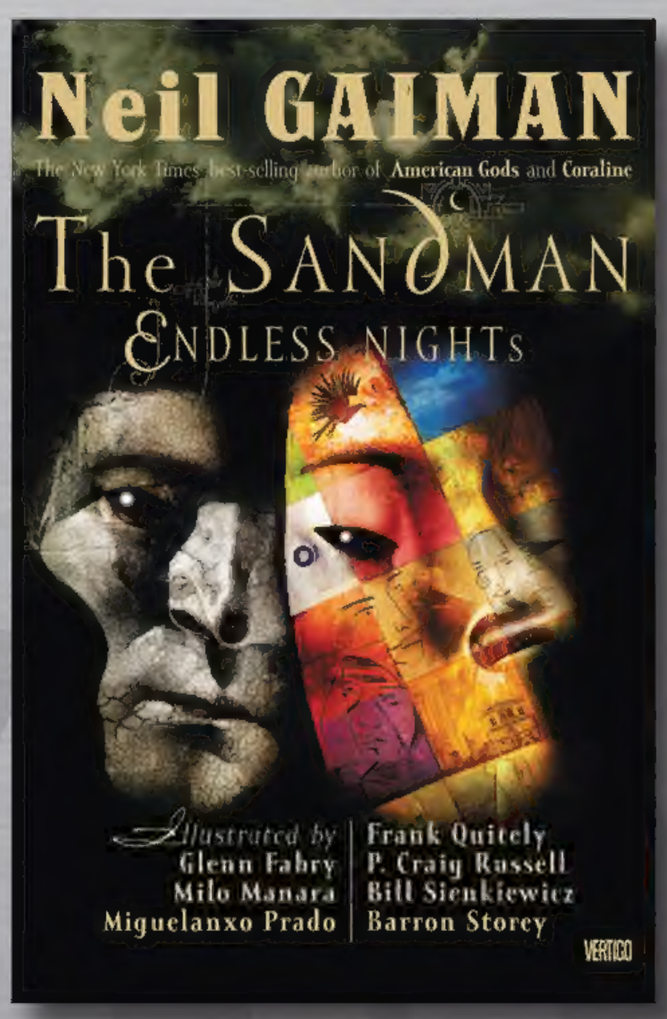

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